



## PHOTO & CAPTION

### Region Takes a Crack at Organic Nuts



In the upper reaches of the Dominican Republic's degraded Yaque del Norte watershed, the Empresa Comercializadora Los Montones (commonly known as "Los Montones") produces macadamia nuts with organic farming technologies.

Los Montones, a joint alliance between macadamia nut farmers and the Dominican dessert producer Helados Bon, received USAID funding to promote simultaneously the protection of the country's natural resources and the development of small businesses through a matching grant mechanism. The potentially harmful toxins found in many

chemical fertilizers are absent from the organic methodology the alliance employs, which is helping to revitalize the drainage area and minimize environmental impact.

Within six months, the venture has made impressive headway. Los Montones has succeeded in developing product recipes, a marketing strategy with 15 initial domestic outlets, and a product line brand, La Loma Caribbean Macadamia, which offers wafer cookies in three flavors.

This alliance of growers and producers is planning to expand its domestic distribution network and increase macadamia production. The alliance's entrepreneurial spirit and social responsibility not only hold promise of financial success, but also assure the environmental sustainability of the Yaque del Norte watershed and the livelihoods of the inhabitants living in the Dominican Republic's northwestern regions.

***An alliance between Dominican farmers and a local dessert company hopes to expand the production and use of macadamia nuts organically grown in the Yaque del Norte watershed.***